

August 25, 2008

RE: Submissions to Inform the Five-Year Strategic Plan for NITRD Program

This responds to the July 25, 2008 Federal Register notice (73 F.R. 43477) inviting submissions in support of the strategic plan of the Federal Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Program (NITRD). Thank you very much for providing the opportunity to comment on this critically important program.

I write on behalf of the more than 350 member companies of the Information Technology Association of America. The Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) is the premier IT and electronics industry association working to maintain America's role as the world's innovation headquarters. Following its April 1, 2008 merger with the Government Electronics and Information Technology Association (GEIA), ITAA provides leadership in market research, standards development, business development, networking and public policy advocacy to some 350 corporate members doing business in the public and commercial sector markets. These members range from the smallest start-ups to industry leaders offering Internet, software, services and hardware solutions. ITAA offers the industry's only grassroots-to-global network, carrying the voice of IT to companies, markets and governments at the local, state, national and international levels to facilitate growth and advocacy. The Association maintains a formal alliance with more than 40 regional groups in the U.S. and Canada, representing 16,000 technology-related companies through the Technology Councils of North America. ITAA is also the U.S. member of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance, a network of nearly 70 industry associations from around the world. For more information, visit www.ita.org.

Today, use of information technology – hardware, software, applications, networking, services – is becoming pervasive in all sectors of the economy, and by every conceivable actor: organizations (internally and externally), whether business or government or any other imaginable organization; individuals, whether as students, consumers, citizens, educators, business owners and employees, or farmers and fishermen. IT is having a profound effect on the productivity and growth of every economic sector in which it is used. At base, IT is not just another albeit critically important industry among those listed in the ranks of farming, manufacturing, services or other enterprises. IT increases the productivity of every industry it touches. It enables innovation in every economic sector. It allows companies to improve efficiencies and lower the cost of doing business, which in turn frees up capital for other investments and lowers the prices of consumer goods. IT enables the creation of altogether new technologies and branches of science, such as nanotech and growing, detailed knowledge of the human genome. There is a deep integration of IT into other engineering systems in today's world. Information Technology also improves the lives of every citizen who can access it by facilitating

communications and commerce, increasing the transparency of government and improving access to government services. At the same time, developing a stronger IT workforce for the challenges ahead has never been more important and is starting to become a real problem unless serious steps are taken as soon as possible.

All of this needs to be reflected in the strategic plans of the NITRD. ITAA is a strong supporter of this program and looks forward to continuing to engage in conversations with the NCO about its strategic plans for the future. For our introductory comments, we rely on last year's PCAST report, "Leadership Under Challenge, Information Technology R&D in a Competitive World", http://www.ostp.gov/pdf/nitrd_review.pdf ("PCAST Report") We generally endorse its findings, and are pleased to see that many of the priorities for research listed in that report (see generally Chapter 4) appear to be reflected in the list of priorities for research on the NITRD web site, www.nitrd.gov Of particular interest to our organization is the discussion of R&D on the subject of Cyber Security and Information Assurance. This must be a critical national priority, as a matter of national security and to assure that there is adequate consumer and enterprise assurance and trust in the medium of the Internet to continue to allow it to continue to grow and develop.

We also strongly endorse the PCAST recommendation that "Federal agencies should rebalance their networking and information technology R&D funding portfolios by increasing: (1) support for important networking and information technology problems that require larger-scale, longer-term, multidisciplinary R&D and using existing or new mechanisms to address those problems and (2) emphasis on innovative and therefore higher-risk but potentially higher-payoff explorations." (PCAST Report at 26). As the Report notes, this is arguably the "most critical need" of the NITRD program, and has many supplemental benefits including providing a mechanism for increasing the number of researchers and students in the field, by making R&D more relevant to recognizable problems and issues in the modern economy, or as the report puts it, may attract students and researchers to work on "more challenging problems relevant to the future." (PCAST Report at 27). Given the critical nature of the IT sector, a large scale, longer term, multidisciplinary approach to the basic federal program for funding R&D in this sector is equally critical.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to continuing the conversation begun by this submission. If we can provide additional information, please feel free to contact me at pbond@itaa.org